HATE CRIME TEAM
STATUS REPORT

- January 1999 to June 2000 -

British Columbia is committed to:

- **Preventing hate-motivated activities of all kinds**
- **Encouraging victims to report hate crimes against them**
- **Consistent investigation and prosecution of hate crimes**
- **Encouraging people to report hate crimes**

With the establishment of the Hate Crime Team in 1996, British Columbia became the first province in Canada to develop:

- **Definition of hate crimes**
- **Enforcement policy**
- **Toll-free information line (1-800-563-0808)**
- **Data base to track details of hate crime across B.C.**

What is Hate Crime?

A hate or bias crime is a criminal offence motivated by hate, prejudice or bias committed against a person or property. The crime targets an identifiable group based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or any other similar factor. Hate crimes harm and terrify particular victims as well as the entire group with which the victim identifies. Victims of hate crime are often targeted solely on the basis of who they are, not because of anything they have done.

Hate Crime Statistics

The Crime:

- In Canada, it is estimated only 5-10% of hate crimes are reported to police. Reporting and tracking of these crimes is inconsistent, reflecting a need for further education and training.
- From July 1997 to December 1999, 426 hate or bias incidents involving 532 victims and 451 suspects were reported to the Hate Crime Team. While reports were received from most B.C. regions, the majority (85%) of incidents occurred in the densely-populated Lower Mainland.
- Over 50% of hate crimes involved racial bias. Sexual orientation (33%) and religious bias (10%) were other motives (over 70% of religious bias was anti-Semitic). Bias against gender and physical disabilities were also factors.
- Most hate crimes involved assault (35%), followed by threats (20%), mischief (15%), criminal harassment and communication (12%) and hate propaganda (10%). In 15% of incidents the target was a group or business.

Where an incident involved violence (almost 50% of reported incidents), the suspect and victim were likely strangers, which is higher than in other violent offences. Almost half of reported hate crimes involved serious injury or aggravated assault.

Hate crimes are difficult to solve: in 90% of unsolved cases, the victim or police were unable to identify a suspect. Violent hate crimes have a much lower resolution rate than other reported violent *Criminal Code* offences.

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The Offender:

- Suspect information reflects data relating to other crimes: over 90% of offenders were male. The majority of offenders were between 18 and 29 years (60%). Almost 20% of suspects were young offenders (age 12-17).
- In 56% of incidents the suspect was Caucasian or "white" while 35% of suspects were visible minorities, including South Asian (29%), East/Southeast Asian (29%), Aboriginal (19%). Suspect ethnicity was not reported in 9% of incidents.

The Victim:

- The majority of victims were male (72%). In 30% of incidents the ethnicity of the victim was not identified. Where known, one third were Caucasian or "white" and 38% were visible minorities.
- When the victim was a visible minority, 34% were East/Southeast Asian, 23% were South Asian, 16% were Aboriginal and 26% a visible minority not included in the above groupings.
- About 1/3 of victims were 26-42 years; 25% were under 26 years.

The Mandate of the Hate Crime Team

. . . is to ensure the effective identification, investigation and prosecution of crimes motivated by hate by:

- Building consistent police investigation and reporting
- Coordinating enforcement
- Developing a data tracking system
- Strengthening linkages with provincial, federal and international agencies
- Responding to victim needs
- Identifying required legislative changes
- Providing training for police and other justice personnel

Holding Offenders Accountable

Police Training

Training is a priority to increase the recognition, investigation and response to hate crime. Since the Hate Crime Team was established in 1997, police have trained 2,000 officers from RMCP detachments, municipal police forces and police academy recruits, as well as personnel from Correctional Service Canada, Customs Border Services and provincial and federal probation staff.

Regional training sessions have been held in Fort St. John, Castlegar, Fernie, Invermere, Salmon Arm, Terrace, Smithers and Vanderhoof. Further sessions trained RCMP at the Fairmont Academy in Vancouver and cadets and school liaison officers at the Justice Institute of B.C.

Crown Prosecution

Communication between police and Crown counsel are key in prosecutions. Police officers on the Hate Crime Team advise Crown counsel of incidents under investigation. Successful prosecution of hate crimes depend on identifying motivation in the Report to Crown Counsel. Awareness sessions and bulletins assist Crown counsel in establishing links with local police. The most notable prosecution of a hate crime in B.C. resulted in the conviction of five men in the death of Nirmal Singh Gill.

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Strengthening the Law

The Attorney General continues to urge the federal government for better laws to support the work of police and Crown counsel by:

- Making possession of hate propaganda for the purpose of distributing it a *Criminal Code* offence
- Expanding *Criminal Code* hate propaganda provisions to include a wider range of identifiable groups such as sexual orientation
- Updating the *Criminal Code* to include Internet hate crime

Increasing Community Awareness

Community agencies and victims play a critical role in ensuring successful investigations by reporting hate crime/bias incidents to police or the Hate Crime Team. Developing awareness and community links is a Hate Crime Team priority. Strategies include:

- Training and awareness sessions conducted by police throughout the province. The sessions resulted in an increase in reporting of hate/bias incidents.
- Community information meetings organized with representatives from 45 community agencies in Castlegar, Fernie, Terrace, Smithers and Vanderhoof.
- Consultations with community groups at 37 meetings attended by 413 people.
- Presentations at the University of B.C., the University of Victoria, Douglas College, Langara College and the University College of the Fraser Valley. Team members also participated in 14 conferences, conducted sessions with the high school anti-racism drama group TROO (Total Respect Of Others) and presented to nine youth conferences attended by 630 delegates.
- The toll-free Victims' Information Line receives calls from people who may be reluctant to contact local police for a variety of reasons. The phone line (1-800 563-0808) is advertised in the End Hate Crime pamphlet, available in English, Chinese, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Korean and Spanish. The pamphlet is distributed to police agencies and court houses in the Lower Mainland and south Vancouver Island and to victim service coordinators and community groups throughout the province.
- Information on the Hate Crime Team and hate crime policy is available on the Ministry of Attorney General Web site at: **www.ag.gov.bc.ca/end_hate_crime**

Links with Multiculturalism B.C.

Multiculturalism B.C. (a division of the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration) supports Hate Crime Team activities by building cross-cultural understanding and supporting anti-racist activities. Multiculturalism B.C. refers potential criminal hate or bias incidents to the Hate Crime Team for investigation. Other incidents may be referred to organizations such as the B.C. Human Rights Commission or the Residential Tenancy Branch.

Multiculturalism B.C. also focuses on conditions that could lead to future hate/bias incidents by:

- Consulting with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities
- Developing community plans to respond to racism and hate activities
- Producing the 'Courage to Stand' video about community efforts against hate activities
- Working with the public sector in Campbell River, Cranbrook, Quesnel and Terrace to encourage diversity and anti-racism

Fighting Internet Hate Crime

Hate-related material on the Internet is difficult to track and circulates easily across international borders. B.C. Hate Crime Team members are represented on the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Offensive Content on the Internet which shares Internet crime developments across Canada and provides recommendations on provincial and national approaches to police investigations and criminal reforms. Other Internet hate crime meetings attended by Hate Crime Team Members focused on inter-jurisdictional cooperation and codes of conduct among Internet service providers.

Continuing the Work

The Hate Crime Team is planning a conference, 'Focus on Hate Crime: An International Conference on the Investigation and Prosecution of Hate Crimes' for police and prosecutors in March 2002. The conference will focus on barriers to investigating and prosecuting hate crimes, promoting international coordination and cooperation, and increasing the knowledge and ability of police and prosecutors through international cooperative efforts.

Investigation and enforcement training for police will continue to be a priority, as is working with police to encourage comprehensive tracking of hate crimes.

The Hate Crime Team

Hate Crime Team members are from municipal police departments, RCMP, the Ministry of Attorney General and the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration. Hate Crime Team staff include two police officers and a community coordinator as well as Crown counsel advice:

Sgt. Fiona Weller is a 25 year veteran with the Vancouver police department. Her VPD work includes the school liaison program.

Cpl. Les Flewelling has served with the RCMP for 20 years and has an extensive background in serious crime investigation as well as general duty policing.

Sheri Fabian manages community coordination activities and maintains the data base of incidents reported to the Team by B.C. police agencies.

Myron Claridge has been a Crown counsel prosecutor for 24 years. He was instrumental in drafting the provincial hate crime policy and provides advice to police and Crown counsel on hate-related issues. He participates in community meetings, advises the federal government and makes suggestions for amendments to the *Criminal Code* relating to the Internet.

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